

Woodahl plans talks with aluminum folks

Montana Standard—7
Wednesday, March 25, 1970

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Standard State Bureau

HELENA — Atty. Gen. Robert L. Woodahl says he has talked twice with officials of the Anaconda Co. about fluoride pollution in the Columbia Falls area, but "nothing concrete" has resulted.

"No agreements have been reached, but I intend to pursue it," the Republican official said.

According to a recent report by University of Montana botanist C. C. Gordon, fluoride emissions from Anaconda Aluminum Co. are killing vegetation near Columbia Falls and as far away as Glacier National Park.

THE STATE DOES not yet have standards restricting the emission of fluorides, but public hearings are planned for May 21 on a proposed regulation. Normally, existing plants are given a year or so to comply with new regulations.

"I don't intend to wait until the last moment for them to make a decision on what they will do," Woodahl said. "I can't take any legal action now, but I intend to communicate with them (Anaconda officials)."

"This is nothing more than a further extension of my policy of uniform law enforcement," he added. "The law is the law and no one ought to be above it or below it."

THE ATTORNEY general said he has had two contacts with officials of the parent Anaconda Co., but none yet with those actually running the aluminum plant. He intends to talk to them in the future, he said.

Woodahl added that he favors solving pollution problems by negotiation if possible.

"Only when no other way is open should legal action be instituted," he said.

"I don't think you can overnight expect them (the industries) to change things which occurred when there were no controls," he said. "It will take a tremendous investment by industry to correct the situation."

THAT COST probably will be passed on to the public, he added.

"Industries, I think, are aware of public concern and I think they will take the proper steps," he said.

Speaking specifically of the Anaconda Aluminum plant, the attorney general said he wants to work out, in cooperation with the board of health, a "responsibly planned, definite timetable on what's got to be done."